

BEWARE OF SOFT SEPARATISM

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The separation that is practiced by many fundamental Baptist churches is “soft,” meaning it is insufficient and ineffectual. It is insufficient in warning, insufficient in education, insufficient in the actual practice of separation.

Soft separatism is characterized by focusing on positive truth and avoiding “negativism and criticism.” Soft separatists don’t reprove error plainly or name the names of compromisers. They avoid dealing with “personalities.”

Soft separatists don’t distance themselves properly from those who are headed in a wrong direction in order to cut off the leaven of compromise from their personal lives and families and churches. Compromise is a contagious spiritual disease, and separation is the only thing that will protect us from its pollution.

Soft separatists are more concerned about the danger of “fragmentation” and more desirous of “unity” and getting along with the brethren than about standing for the truth.

Soft separatists don’t properly educate their church members so that they won’t be led astray by the evangelical bridge builders and contemporary worship musicians, etc. In a soft separatist church the people are largely ignorant about important issues such as contemporary worship music, textual criticism and the modern versions, New Evangelicalism, the Southern Baptist Convention, Reformed theology, reconstructionism, Darwinian and theistic evolution, contemplative mysticism, and the emerging church.

If they are given any education on such things, it is paper thin and ineffectual.

Soft separatists don’t carry books containing clear warnings of such things in their bookstores. They don’t encourage the people to read publications that issue clear warnings about such things. They don’t have conferences to provide education and exhortation on such matters. Their conferences are focused on evangelism and world missions and “positive” Bible preaching and “friendship,” which are important topics, but the equally important issues of separatism and related topics are neglected.

Since the previous characteristics are actually principles that have characterized New Evangelicalism since the 1950s, it is no surprise that soft separatism leads to full-blown New Evangelicalism within a generation or two.

Soft separatism is the mindset that has already led a great many IBaptist churches into the contemporary sphere, and it is going to have the same result in a great many more churches in coming years

This is because soft separatism is not biblical separation. It is separation in name only.

Some years ago a leader in the GARBC said separation should not be a wall but a picket fence. That is a perfect description of soft separatism. A picket fence is for decoration rather than protection.

That is the type of separation that many fundamental Baptist preachers have today. They aren't really separatists and they don't like separation; they are pragmatists more than Biblicists; but they still espouse separation because it is expected by their crowd. Since they are man-pleasers, they try to maintain this profession until the mood of their crowd changes and it becomes acceptable to renounce separatism. And the mood of the crowd is changing rapidly today!

Soft separation is the path that is leading many from fundamental Baptist churches to "conservative evangelicalism," which in turn is the bridge to the broader evangelicalism that is filled with ancient and end-time heresies.

"Soft separation" was the type of separation that was practiced at Highland Park Baptist Church and Tennessee Temple in Chattanooga, Tennessee, when I was a student there in the 1970s and it was a major reason why Highland Park is a rock & roll emerging church today.

Dr. Lee Roberson left the Southern Baptist Convention, but he never really separated from it. He continued to bring in SBC preachers and didn't properly educate the church members and students about the deep compromise and liberalism in the convention. He brought in evangelical speakers such as Warren Wiersbe, thus giving a confusing signal. Are we independent Baptists or are we Southern Baptists, "fundamentalists" or evangelicals? Who knows, because our leaders have a foot in all camps. In his pursuit of education and bigness, Dr. Roberson allowed the school to become a "mixed multitude" in the sense of allowing contradictory positions to be held on many important issues. There were men who supported modern textual criticism and men who rejected it, men who supported and used only the KJV and men who taught from the modern versions in the classrooms, men who believed in repentance and men who didn't, men who were full-blown New Evangelicals and men who were opposed to it, men who were Calvinists and men who weren't, men who loved "Christian" psychobabble and men who opposed it, men who were "universal church" and men who were local church, etc.

When soft separatism has sway, the trumpet gives an uncertain sound and the people don't know exactly what to do. Should they arm for war? With whom? On what basis?

With soft separatism, it's not clear.

(See *The Collapse of Biblical Separatism*, a free eBook at the the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org.)

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